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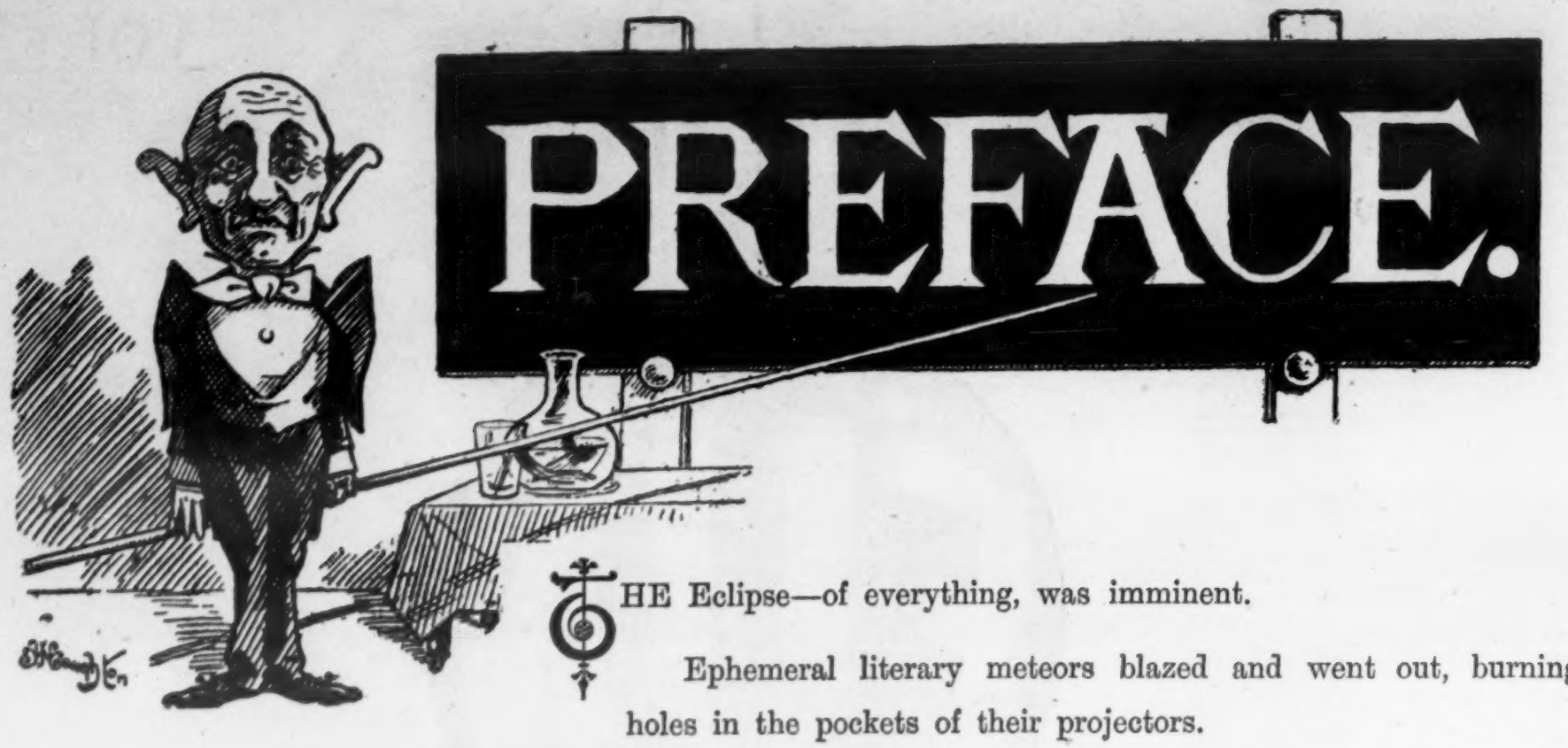


THE Eclipse—of everything, was imminent.

Ephemeral literary meteors blazed and went out, burning holes in the pockets of their projectors.

Bilious comets shed their psychological but immoral tales, and the tales fell flat.

The stars paled; even the sun looked blue; while the moon positively wasn't in it.

The air was charged with electricity. It was a popular air, and the lowest charge was sixpence for twelve words. But price was no object. Telegrams from the uttermost ends of the earth poured in. "Is it out yet?" "When is it coming out?" "Why isn't it out?" "Will it never come out?" Telegraph operatives struck for higher wages, and the Bouverie Street telegraph boys marched backwards and forwards, all day long, in an endless procession twelve abreast, obstructing the traffic, and electrifying the neighbourhood.

Scientific exploration parties camped in Fleet Street. The young lions of Peterboro' Court lay low and roared in whispers. Country cousins imploring policemen to tell them the cause of the excitement were peremptorily ordered to "move on."

Suddenly a silence fell upon the world, and it was generally understood that the expected for once was about to happen.

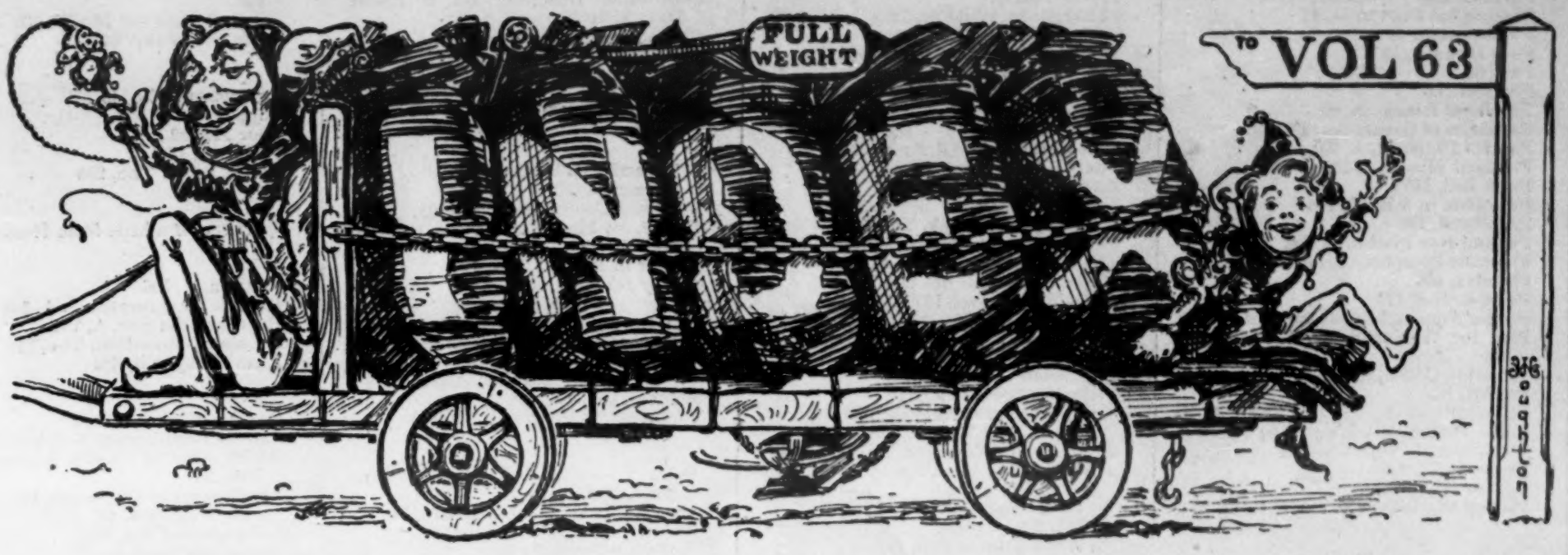
"Is it all right?" cried the gentleman who greases the wheels to the gentleman who polishes the surface. "Never better!" replied the administrator of finishing touches. "Then," shouted the illustrious lubricator, "Go!'s the word."

And it went!

The scientific enthusiasts levelled their Telescopical-Photographical-Microscopical Binoculars. The unscientific persons who knew but a thing or two held smoked glasses before their optical organs, while the foolish people who had come unprepared for such a marvellous illumination shaded their eyes with their hands and sobbed out, "It is too bright! It is too brilliant!"

Up, up, It rose. High above It's eclipsed contemporaries, and upon It was written in letters of the Fire of Genius—

THE SIXTY-THIRD VOLUME OF "FUN."



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